

## Ginkgo Biloba FACT Sheet

**Scientific Name:** Ginkgoaceae

**Common Name:** Ginkgo Biloba, Ginkgo, Ginkoba

**Brands Tested and Approved for Quality by Consumerlab.com:**

Ginkgolidin, Enzymatic Therapy Ginkgo Biloba, NOW Ginkgo

**Historical Perspective:** The ginkgo tree is the oldest species of tree dating back 200 million years. The leaves of the ginkgo tree have been used for centuries in China for their medicinal qualities. In Germany and France, ginkgo is often prescribed for various cognitive disorders; however, these countries use standardized extracts of these herbs, meaning the dose being provided is pretty consistent. In 1997, ginkgo was the top selling herb in the United States.

**Common Uses:** Ginkgo may be used to treat vascular diseases because of its ability to increase blood flow; this is how it may improve memory and concentration. Ginkgo is also sometimes used to treat irregular heartbeat, asthma, hearing loss and premenstrual syndrome.

**Investigational Uses:** It has been investigated for use in treatment of glaucoma and dementia. Some studies indicate that Ginkgo is effective in treating dementia associated with vascular disease. No such conclusions have been made regarding glaucoma.

**Form(s) Used:** Common forms of ginkgo preparations are capsules, nutrition bars, sublingual sprays (below the tongue) and tablets.

\*\* Ginkgo seeds and fruit pulp are considered toxic; do not use these forms.

**Common and/or Recommended Dosage:**

- For dementia 120-240mg by mouth a day, divided into two or three doses (example, 40mg three times a day for a total dose of 120mg).
- For peripheral vascular disease and tinnitus (associated with hearing loss) 120-160mg a day, divided in two or three doses.

**Average Cost per Day at Common/Recommended Dosage:** Average daily cost is 31-62 cents a day, \$2.15-4.34 per week and \$8.61-17.36 per month.

**Potential Side Effects:**

- Allergic reactions are uncommon, but have occurred (i.e. difficulty breathing; closing of the throat; swelling of the lips, tongue or face; hives)
- Seizures (with excessive use of ginkgo seeds)
- Headache
- Irregular heart beat
- Nausea, diarrhea, vomiting
- Dizziness
- Bleeding

**Food Drug Interactions:** Because it has similar properties, Ginkgo may interact with medications that cause blood thinning such as Coumadin or Warfarin. By the same token, anyone who is on aspirin therapy or who takes Vitamin E in therapeutic doses may also be at risk for an increased bleeding time.

Ginkgo may also interact with Lovenox, Orgaran, Fragmin, Normiflo and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications.

**Contraindication to Use:** Ginkgo should be stopped a few weeks prior to any surgical procedure; the surgery team will advise for specific guidelines. In addition, if you are taking any of the medications mentioned above, consult with your health care provider before taking ginkgo.

**Research Data on Safety and Efficacy:** Some studies indicate that ginkgo is helpful for dementia and peripheral vascular disease; however, more studies need to be done. No other claims for its use have been validated. Ginkgo is generally safe; however, anyone taking any of the medications mentioned previously or who has any kind of bleeding disorder should be cautious. Consult with your health care provider.

**Bottom-Line:** The brands listed by Consumerlab.com are some of the brands that contain adequate amounts of the active ingredient. Ginkgo is generally safe; however, anyone taking prescription or over the counter medications (especially those listed above) should consult with a health care provider or pharmacist before taking ginkgo.

References:

1. Consumerlab.com
2. <http://my.webmd.com>
3. *The Health Professional's Guide to Popular Dietary Supplements*, Allison Sarubin, MS, RD, The American Dietetic Association, 2000
4. *Professional's Handbook of Complementary and Alternative Medicines*, C.W. Fetrow, PharmD, Juan R. Avila, PharmD, Springhouse, 2001
5. [www.gnc.com](http://www.gnc.com)